

Kaiserslautern Tests New Security System

KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany – The Army has an Open Door policy – to a point. The Global War on Terror has placed new emphasis on separating friend from foe at the front gate. As security systems grow in use and sophistication, the Installation Management Agency is gaining an increasing role in testing new gate security systems at its European garrisons.

Testing for a new installation gate security system is now underway at IMA-EURO's Kaiserslautern Garrison. The system, called the Enhanced Security Pedestrian Gate, may become standard issue throughout the Army. Thus far, say garrison officials, it's living up to its name – enhanced security.

USAG Kaiserslautern force protection and anti-terrorism officer James Otto, who spent more than a year designing the gate, says the device is user-friendly -- for those with proper identification and a need to enter the base. Those who don't will find themselves locked out.

The new system is expected to offer increased safety for soldiers and families while reducing the Army's force protection bill. Savings could be substantial. The cost for one of the gates is about \$160,000, compared to \$210,000 for round the clock manning by guards. Otto says if the gates receive favorable review by the USAREUR Provost Marshall's Office and DA officials, more will be installed in Kaiserslautern and other garrisons around Europe.

The new gate requires pedestrians to use both ID cards and a finger print reader. Although the system is automated, human intelligence remains at the heart of garrison security. The gate includes several mechanisms that detect efforts to circumvent procedures. The entry point is also equipped with cameras, speakers and a push-to talk button, enabling pedestrians to talk with a guard.

Guards are able to see and hear pedestrians and can make quick and practical entry decisions. For example, the guard may block several pedestrians trying to use only one person's card. Conversely, an identifiable family member with groceries and small children would be allowed in. "If something goes wrong or is out of the ordinary, a human makes the decision -- not a computer," said Otto.

And how do soldiers like the new gate? Staff Sgt. Tyler Hopkins, from the 37th Transportation Command, uses the gate almost daily to pass between adjacent kasernes. "I do love that gate," said Hopkins, "Especially when you're carrying a lot of stuff."

The new security system has cut the sergeant's 20-minute journey between the bases' "old" gates into a five-minute walk to the new one. "It's outstanding for me," said Hopkins, "As long as it doesn't break down, I'm in good shape."

Testing on the new gates will continue until the end of the month. The results of the tests will be provided to the USAREUR Provost Marshal and the Army's OPM General.

Otto says five gates for the Kaiserslautern military community have been funded by USAREUR. Others, including entrances to Husteroff Kaserne in Pirmasens and Landstuhl Regional Medical Center, are expected to become operational before the end of the year.

(Story by Christine June, USAG Kaiserslautern Public Affairs)